

Dragon Fruit Cacti, Vietnam, 1970

—Bruce Sydow

A lizard bellied in blue
measures me in sidelong glances
as a cactus blossom beckons me
to the allure of its sweet fragrance.
The prickly buds envelop me
with puncturing notes
as the succulents pierce my hands
and inject spiny nectar.

As their nodes heighten my senses
in a painful bargain,
the rows of fruit skirts
the precipice of a magenta bloom.

A sunset applauds in dying splendor
of splashed orange over China Beach
painting a palette unmatched
by any Master save for God.